

Costa Rica

Army Aids in Marijuana Destruction

A 40-member team from Joint Task Force-Bravo helped Costa Rica's counternarcotics police eradicate 1,279,307 marijuana plants during a Central Skies mission that swept through the country's Talamanca Valley in March.

The Honduras-based team, dubbed Task Force Enabler, flying three UH-60 Black Hawks and a CH-47 Chinook out of the Puerto Limon Airport on Costa Rica's Caribbean coast, provided command and control and crucial air support to Costa Rica's Public Security Ministry's special support police.

Before venturing into the lush mountains where marijuana is cultivated, the JTF-Bravo team trained the Costa Ricans to rappel from helicopters, descend from the Chinook in a device called a Jacob's

ladder, and to be extracted by a Special Patrol Infiltration/Exfiltration System.

"Our job was operational support, getting the police to the right place at the right time so they could get the mission done," said LTC Brian Keeth, Task Force Enabler commander. "This has been my sixth Central Skies mission, and it's one of the best we've done. In the past, we could find the marijuana, but we couldn't get to it. The growers moved the crops to steep slopes, high in the mountains, so we couldn't reach it. It's taken us a year to get spun up with this new rappelling and SPIES capability, and you see the results — more than a million plants.

"But our mission has been much more than eradication; it's given us an opportunity to work and train as a team. We've built trust, confidence and friendship between our forces." — *USAF MSgt. Pat McKenna, JTF Bravo Public Affairs Office*

Vicenza, Italy

SETAF Instructors Train Ukrainian NCOs

AMERICAN soldiers recently traveled to Ukraine to teach leadership skills to noncommissioned officers of the former Soviet republic's army.

Five Southern European Task Force soldiers were guest instructors at the Ukrainian army's inaugural primary NCO-development course. The weeklong course, conducted at a training area near Lviv, included extensive classroom work, a compass course, some field exercises and physical training.

"The Ukrainian army's leaders see a very real need to upgrade the existing noncommissioned officers into a more experienced corps," said CSM Vincent Myers, SETAF's top NCO.

Myers — with SETAF operations SGM James Rich —



developed the course to familiarize Ukrainian NCOs with everything from current American thought on leadership to how NATO conducts land navigation and map reading.

"The Ukrainian soldiers are hungry for knowledge," he said. "They're eager to learn from us and to show us how their system works." — *SGT Vincent Picard, SETAF PAO*



CW2 Larry Carleton pilots his CH-47 over Costa Rica's Talamanca Valley during the Central Skies mission.



SPC Neil C. Jones

SPC Brad Drake of the 186th QM Co. lets water flow from a ROWPU during the Fort Lee competition.

Fort Lee, Va.

Competitors Keep the Water Flowing

THE best overall water purification team at this year's ROWPU Rodeo was Company A, 703rd Main Support Battalion, from Fort Stewart, Ga. The Quartermaster Center and School hosted the event.

The "Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit Regulated On-site Demonstrated Efficiency Objective" is a mini-desalination plant that water purification teams use to provide potable water for soldiers' consumption and for hospitals and dining, laundry and bath facilities in field environments.

"These soldiers can draw water from a stream or the ocean," said MSG James Langelotti, Water Training Division chief. "The variety of water they can purify is unlimited."

Of the 65 teams that applied to compete in the annual championship, only 32 advanced to phase one, at Fort Bragg, N.C., in February. The top six teams competed here in

April for the title of the best water-purification team in the Department of Defense.

Co. A team leader SGT Rodney Brundige said: "We take our jobs seriously, because the lives of the soldiers we support depend on it. You can fight battles," Brundige said, "but without us, you can't win." — *SPC Neil C. Jones, Fort Lee PAO*

Tongduchon, Korea

EOD Defuses Korean War-era Bomb

ORDNANCE left over from the Korean War was discovered in Area I just north of Camp Mobile, here, and was safely defused by the 718th Explosive Ordnance Detachment.

The largest of four area support groups on the peninsula, Area I provides base-operations support and enhanced quality of life for more than 27,000 soldiers, civilians and family members living and working north of Seoul. A Korean construction crew that was widening drainage ditches in the area found and marked the device, said SGT Rick Benge, a member of the team that investigated the ordnance.

"We discovered the bomb was an M-64, 500 lb. U.S. Air Force device from the Korean War," Benge said. "We built a safety berm around it, then waited for word that everyone had been evacuated beyond the blast radius."

Team members were more than a little concerned about the 50-year old springs in the bomb and how long they would keep the firing mechanism from activating if it were jostled or moved before they defused it.

The plan was to defuse and transport the bomb to Story Impact Area near Panmunjom



SGT Mark Porter (all)



SGT Rick Benge of the 718th Explosive Ordnance Detachment (top) examines the Korean War-vintage 500-pound bomb discovered in a drainage ditch. After being defused the bomb is lifted by crane into a waiting vehicle (center) then carefully settled in (above) for the trip to a disposal area.

on the Demilitarized Zone, then destroy it later, said LTC Jonathon Hunter, U.S. Army Garrison-Casey commander.

"Benge disarmed the bomb and we took it to the impact

area," he said. "The whole operation went very smoothly and there was no panic in the streets when people were asked to evacuate." — *Barry R. Napp, Area I PAO*